

MICHIGAN LEADWORK

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH

FEBRUARY 2009

UIA Expands Services and Staffing to Meet Surging Unemployment Claims

The Unemployment Insurance Agency had not faced a situation like this since 2002-2003, when early retirements drained its ranks of experienced staff at the same time the agency was in the midst of converting from a statewide system of local offices to three call centers.

Then as now, unemployed workers experienced great difficulty in reaching agency representatives to talk about their unemployment claims or to file for unemployment benefits.

Now, Michigan's continuing high rates of unemployment, combined with seasonal layoffs in the auto and supplier industries and in retail trade, along with newly extended federal unemployment benefits, caused waves of unemployed workers to flood UIA phone systems, local Problem Resolution Offices (PRO) and online systems for taking unemployment claims.

In December alone, a 90 percent increase in initial unemployment claims occurred in Michigan.

As the level of frustration among the unemployed grew, Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm called for a coordinated and expedited solution to meet the current and anticipated needs of the state's unemployed workers.

"In this time of severe economic challenge, more citizens than ever are in need, and we must do all we can to provide them with the assistance they need," the governor said.

Agencies across state government, including DELEG, the Departments of Information Technology, Management & Budget, and the State Employer, answered the governor's call and joined in helping UIA meet the challenge.

Through a cooperative effort, UIA expanded its hours of operation and added telephone lines for its MARVIN system, which unemployed workers must call once every two weeks to certify their eligibility for benefits. The agency also launched an online version of MARVIN.

With the online system, UIA has doubled its capacity for accepting unemployment claims, which allowed the agency to increase the number of claims processed online by 400 percent a week.

In December, the agency opened a temporary PRO at Cadillac Place in Detroit to go along with the other six PROs around the state. Hours at the PROs were also expanded by two hours a day.



Unemployed workers wait to meet with UIA staff at the Detroit Problem Resolution Office that opened in late December at Cadillac Place in Detroit. In January, the PRO helped more than 7,000 individuals with their unemployment claims.

Call center hours were extended by an hour and half a day, and UIA staff was given expanded mandatory and voluntary overtime hours. Staff is now working nine-hour days plus three Saturdays a month.

To further help in handling the heavy call volumes a new call center was opened in Lansing, adding about 200 phone lines to the agency's toll-free claims line.

Additional staff was hired with nearly 240 new employees on board at the agency by early February. New staff training was condensed to a one-week training program with supplemental on-the-job training, and expanded training hours including evenings and weekends.

While UIA has taken aggressive action to meet the rising demand for its services, the agency was already taking steps to enhance its services

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A Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

By now I'm sure you've read about Gov. Granholm's budget recommendations for FY2010. As the governor said when announcing her recommendations, the reforms and spending cuts will be painful, but they are necessary if we are to weather this current economic storm. Gov. Granholm's proposal recommends \$670 million in spending reductions and government reforms, including elimination of the Department of History, Arts, and Libraries. In addition, the budget recommends \$230 million in revenue adjustments through tax loophole closures, increased liquor license fees and permit revenues, lottery investments, and tax enforcement actions.

The reality is that Michigan's economy is likely to get worse before it gets better. The good news is that DELEG will play a key role in the governor's plan to create renewable energy jobs and make Michigan the renewable energy hub of North America. Gov. Granholm announced that she has established a bold new energy

standard for Michigan to ensure that we are perfectly positioned to capture the exploding national demand for renewable energy and the jobs it will create. The governor mentioned Michigan's "45 by 20 plan" which means Michigan will reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels for generating electricity by 45 percent by 2020.

To help meet the challenges the governor has set forth, we have formed the new Bureau of Energy Systems, which will be responsible for aligning all renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, and growing the energy sector that will position us to attract new business and create thousands of green jobs in Michigan. In January we brought in a team of energy experts from the Department of Environmental Quality, who are joining staff from the Energy Office, the Public Service Commission, and the Land Bank Fast Track Authority to advance our work on energy related initiatives. Their individual expertise and collective efforts will be critical in fulfilling the mission of Energy Systems and DELEG as a whole. To learn more about our new Energy Systems staff, including Division Director Amy Butler, please read below and on the next page.

On a separate note, I want to commend the team of staff who worked tirelessly to meet the governor's call to action to hire more than 200 new Unemployment Insurance Agency examiners in a three week period. These dedicated folks accomplished a Herculean task, and demonstrated to me once again that DELEG is made up of extremely talented, hardworking folks who care deeply about their work and serving the citizens of Michigan.

Skip Pruss

Amy Butler Joins DELEG as Director of Bureau of Energy Systems

Amy comes from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) where she served as division chief of the Environmental Science and Services Division (ESSD). The ESSD provides outreach financial and technical services leading to the improvement of environmental quality, with an emphasis on pollution prevention and energy efficiency.



Amy Butler

Amy has more than 30 years of experience in developing and administering environmental protection and energy efficiency programs with the state of Michigan. Her focus has been in environmental resource management, including several years at the executive level management. She has managed multiple complex environmental programs with various staffing and funding resources including policy development; program planning; development, and execution; legislation; coordination with internal and external agencies (state, federal, and local), stakeholders, claimants, and consultants. She has served as facilitator for the Department cross-functional interagency teams such as the Economic Development and Growth through Environmental Efficiency (EDGE2) group; and the Cool Cities and Port Cities programs. She has also provided leadership in the areas of bankruptcy, oil and gas, Brownfield redevelopment, and on the Cabinet Tourism Council as well as the Michigan Underground Storage Tank Financial Assurance Fund Coordinator. Amy obtained her undergraduate degree in biology with a focus in chemistry from Oakland University in Rochester, MI, and has taken several classes toward her MBA from Regis University.



At the February 19 Leadership Council meeting, Director Skip Pruss presented members of the DEA hiring team with certificates of appreciation for their extraordinary efforts in the DEA examiner "hiring frenzy." See page six for the full story.

MICHIGAN LEGWORK

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fagank@michigan.gov



DELEG Welcomes New Energy Staff

Dale Copedge, Senior Environmental Engineer

Dale has more than 20 years of work experience in five environmental programs (Pollution Prevention and Compliance Assistance Section, Air Quality Permit Section, Groundwater Permits Section, Planning and Special Programs, and the Non-Point Source Pollution Section) in the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). He has a broad knowledge of industrial and manufacturing processes in the area of permitting and process operations.

Dale is also a 2002 Fellow of the Michigan Political Leadership Program, and he was elected as vice chair of the Ingham County Board of Commissioners. He is also the vice chair of the Executive Advisory Board for Capitol Area Michigan Works! (CAMWs), Executive Board member for Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Community Mental Health (CEI-CMH), an Executive Board member for Mid-South Substance Abuse Coalition (MSSAC), and an Executive Board member for the City of Lansing's Public Service Board. He has a master's degree in environmental engineering and a Bachelors of Science in Packaging from Michigan State University.



Dale Copedge

Lucy Doroshko, Recycling Specialist

For the past 18 years, Lucy has worked for the Michigan Departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources assisting communities and businesses in reducing and recycling their wastes. Initially, she set up the Waste Reduction Clearinghouse, a state 800 number that provided free access to a technical assistance program sponsored by the state. From this she developed and maintained popular tools and websites including the Michigan Recycled Materials Market Directory and an on-line map of local contacts for recycling, composting and household hazardous waste programs.

From 2003 through 2005, Lucy facilitated a Michigan-based Work Group that provided the state recommendations for establishing a recycling infrastructure for consumer electronics. Many of these recommendations have been adopted by state government and were useful in developing the Midwest Electronic Waste Policy upon which legislation in several Midwest states has been based.

Lucy is the recipient of the Lorax award for her work in the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and two Recycler of the Year awards from the Michigan Recycling Coalition. She has a degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in natural resources and has completed graduate work from Michigan State University in public relations.



Lucy Doroshko

David Herb, Environmental Engineer

Dave is responsible for managing the Retired Engineer Technical Assistance Program (RETAP) of DELEG - Bureau of Energy Systems. The RETAP is a statewide resource for small businesses and institutions in need of onsite pollution prevention and energy efficiency technical assistance. RETAP assessments are available to all businesses with 500 or fewer employees in Michigan and institutions of any size. The purpose is to maximize productivity and to minimize costs by identifying waste reduction, resource conservation, and process and energy efficiency opportunities.

David has worked for the state of Michigan since 1998, providing pollution prevention technical assistance to Michigan businesses. He manages the Michigan Pollution Prevention Research Grant Program, and in June 2004, was appointed program manager for the RETAP. He currently coordinates program activities and priorities, conducts engineering assessments, provides training for RETAP engineers, consults regarding pollution prevention practices, and researches new technologies.

David has a master's degree in environmental engineering from Syracuse University and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Clarkson University.



David Herb

Jim Goodheart, Land Use Specialist

Jim comes to DELEG from DEQ where his most recent position was as a land use specialist in the Environmental Sciences and Services division. He also served in a number of other capacities at DEQ including as a land use intra- and inter-departmental specialist, the DEQ liaison to Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's Cool Cities Initiative, the DEQ director's designate working with the governor's Land Use Multi-Agency Workgroups, and as the DEQ director's designate as liaison on the interagency Emerald Ash Borer Management Team. Previously he was founder and president of Resource Policy Consultants and executive director of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

Jim has a Master of Science degree in field biology and outdoor recreation from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife biology and management from Michigan State University, and an associate's degree in biological sciences from Delta College.



Jim Goodheart

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State Insurance Advocate Releases Annual Report, Outlines Plan for Affordability and Industry Oversight



Insurance Advocate Butch Hollowell speaks to a reporter at his media roundtable held February 4.

Michigan's Automobile and Home Insurance Consumer Advocate Melvin Butch Hollowell has released his 2008 annual report, "Affordable Insurance for All. A Plan to Protect Michigan Consumers."

The 328-page report contains 10 recommendations for addressing Michigan's highest-in-the-country auto insurance rates by expanding the coverage choices offered to consumers and by strengthening industry oversight.

"Michigan consumers pay the highest auto insurance rates in the country when they can least afford it. The insurance industry has raised rates 69 percent since 1991 while enjoying virtually no regulation for 30 years,"

Hollowell said. "I'm pleased the governor is taking swift action by calling on the insurance industry to freeze rates while the Legislature works to enact comprehensive insurance reform."

At a media roundtable in Lansing, Hollowell presented the report and outlined his analysis and recommendations which will form the basis for administrative, legislative or other auto insurance reform.

Hollowell said the recommendations were developed from input provided by national insurance experts and testimony from the public given at four auto insurance affordability hearings held around the state last November.

Some of the recommendations contained in the report include:

- Requiring insurance companies to obtain the Office of Financial and Insurance (OFIR) commissioner's approval prior to raising their rates;
- Banning the use of credit scoring, occupation and education level in determining rates;
- Giving consumers with collision insurance the right to recover actual repair costs to the vehicle from the at-fault party in an accident;
- Strengthening the OFIR commissioner's authority to award refunds to consumers, upon a finding that a company has overcharged policyholders.

Other highlights of the report include a "De-Regulation Timeline" that depicts a year-by-year weakening of regulatory oversight of the insurance industry and a 50-state "Best Practices" review, a comprehensive study of insurance reforms that have been implemented by insurance commissioners around the country.

In her State of the State address, Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has called on every auto insurance company to freeze their rates for 12 months while the Legislature works to enact comprehensive insurance reform along the lines of the recommendations set forth in the advocate's report.

Gov. Granholm said the report provides smart, specific proposals to assure that Michigan drivers are paying fair and affordable rates for their automobile insurance.

"This report will be the blueprint for achieving my longstanding goal of affordable, reliable and fair rates for Michigan citizens."

—Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm

"When I established the Office of the Automobile and Home Insurance Consumer Advocate, it was my goal to find solutions to the skyrocketing cost of insurance," Granholm said. "This report will be the blueprint for achieving my longstanding goal of affordable, reliable and fair rates for Michigan citizens."

Last year, Gov. Granholm announced the creation of a new automobile and home insurance consumer advocate position to fight for affordable, reliable, and fair auto and home insurance in Michigan. In March, the governor appointed Hollowell as the State Automobile and Home Insurance Consumer Advocate, charging him with conducting hearings, receiving testimony from consumers and submitting to the governor an annual report on his findings and recommendations for administrative, legislative, or other corrective actions that would positively affect the interests of automobile insurance and home insurance consumers.

Hollowell works to educate consumers on how to protect themselves against predatory or illegal insurance practices and coordinate advocacy and educational efforts with non-governmental consumer advocacy entities and other organizations.

The entire report is available on the Insurance Advocate website, www.michigan.gov/lowerratesnow.

MCTI Bakes Cookies for the Troops

By Patty Miller-Kramer, MCTI

A group of second term culinary class students at the Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI) enjoyed some additional experience in the kitchen baking eight dozen cookies that were sent to Kalamazoo County soldiers on January 23. The "Pride of Scotts Military Service Persons Package Project" features homemade baked goods sent to local service people stationed around the world.

Ken Potts, placement specialist at MCTI, approached Sue DeHaan, a culinary arts instructor at MCTI, about the cookie baking and she embraced the idea.

"It occurred to me, these guys would love homemade cookies and these kids, they bake stuff all the time. And, what a better recipient than our military. So I just kind of connected the two," said Potts. "It lets them be aware of their community and it lets them be aware of their military."

"They really enjoyed doing that. We cooked quite a few cookies," said DeHaan, who felt her students were especially enthusiastic about the project. "This is a great project for them, knowing that these cookies are going to go overseas or where ever and they're going to military people from Kalamazoo County. I think that's an awesome thing to know, my cookies might get shipped over to Iraq."

Before Christmas, MCTI staff collected 30 lbs. of personal hygiene items and purchased \$300 in phone cards to send to an Army group out of Colorado for the holidays.

The Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) is a state-operated, residential, career training center under the Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth-Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). MCTI has 12 vocational training areas: Automotive Technology, Cabinetmaking/Millwork, Culinary Arts, Custodial, Electronics Servicing, Grounds Maintenance, Office Automation, Machine Technology, Certified Nursing Assistant, Graphic Communications and Retail Marketing.



MCTI Culinary student Beth Christiansen gets cookies ready for baking.

DELEG Collaborates with Michigan State Police

Governor Granholm's announcement early last year that she wanted 100 new Michigan State Troopers launched a lot of State of Michigan workers into action immediately. Because the first step of the application process requires taking a Civil Service test, extra test dates were added by the Michigan Civil Service Commission to accommodate the increase in applicants. The Michigan Department of State Police had to use all possible resources to recruit, conduct background investigations, and perform various tests and screenings in their effort to find the best candidates for these positions. The application process usually takes 12 months, but the recruit school was scheduled to begin in six months.

Sgt. Ed Howard of the Michigan State Police Recruiting and Selection Unit discussed the recruiting efforts with his wife, Lori Howard, an analyst with DELEG's Project MOVE (Michigan's Opportunities for Veterans Employment). Lori informed Ed of the many veterans who return to Michigan every week and need employment. Lori enlisted the assistance of co-workers Ralph McKay and Katy Crews to send out more than 4,000 letters to recently separated veterans, informing them of the

upcoming recruit school. Lori and Ed worked together to post the openings on the Michigan Talent Bank.

The efforts paid off. Of the 101 recruits who reported to the 121st Recruit School in August 2008, 22 are veterans and seven of them received the letter from DELEG's Project MOVE. For two of those veterans, Jason King of Kawkawlin and Duane Paris of Detroit, the letter was their first indication of an upcoming recruit school. Both are now Michigan State Troopers and definitely appreciate the collaboration among state agencies.



Jason King



Duane Paris

OHR Hires 276 UIA Examiners to Meet Michigan's Unemployment Needs

By Nicole Sunstrum, Office of Human Resources



The hiring team takes a break from their work: (Back, l-r) Nancy Lampman (MIOSHA), Charlette Duncil (MES Board of Review), Ken Vasilnek, and Frank Russell. (Front, l-r) Patty Gamin, Pam Beach, Myrtle Gregg-LeFay, Lindy Sigulinski, and Arlene Platte (Liquor Control Commission).

The DELEG Office of Human Resources (OHR) has been especially busy lately; actually, busy is an understatement. The announcement from governor's office last week indicating the hiring of more than 200 new unemployment insurance examiners sparked an influx of applicants and the resumes started pouring in. The hope is to complete the entire hiring process for all the new workers by the end of February, in an effort to deter the long lines and hold times being experienced by the staggering number of unemployed Michigan claimants. In just over one week after the announcement, more than 1,500 applications had been received.

Thanks not only to OHR but to the efforts of many volunteers from across the department and state government, resumes

were evaluated, credentials were compiled, interview panels were assembled, and calls were made to begin testing and interviews first thing in the morning Monday, January 26. Many staff not only stayed late into the evening Thursday and Friday, but also found themselves in the office Saturday and Sunday. Due to their dedication and determination, a total of 446 applicants were scheduled and had completed the initial testing—of those, 400 were interviewed. With additional assistance from other areas, the increase in those handling claims work totals more than 276 individuals.

Teams of volunteers were coordinated in order to flawlessly move applicants through the complicated hiring process—testing was done, exams were scored, those who passed were then notified, reference checks were made, and sit down interviews were conducted all in the same day. Each and every person acted in a variety of capacities to ensure that all areas were covered at all times; no job was too big or too small.

OHR's Myrtle Gregg-Lafay volunteered to coordinate the UIA hiring effort and provided the following special recognition of employees, without whom much of what happened would not be possible:

- OHR Director Patty Gamin for serving as an advocate, cheerleader, and "boss extraordinaire," as the staff has wrestled with this "opportunity of a lifetime."

- Frank Russell (OHR) for locating the perfect facility for the new Lansing UIA employees, coordinating volunteers and assisting in orienting them to their tasks.

- Ken Vasilnek (OHR) the logistics and computer guru, for helping to document each and every step, and volunteer wherever and whenever needed.

- Margie Holben (OHR) and Carol Botke (OHR), who were charged with the reviewing of all applications in order to determine proper eligibility.

- Deb Young (OHR) and Nancy Lampman (MIOSHA) for taking responsibility for test scoring process.

- Lindy Sigulinski (OHR) who headed up the interviewing of applicants process. Not only this, but Lindy also revised the UIA interview guide and oriented teams of volunteers from Civil Service, OHR, DELEG, and many state agency OHR offices to serve on interview panels.

- Additional OHR staff such as Patti Hengesbach and Lynn Simons who remained back at the Ottawa building to assist with scheduling, list-making,

supplies and support. Honorable mention also to Harold Lewis (OHR-Detroit).

- Pam Beach (OPLA) who with Vicky Garcia (COSSA) and Sue Luzenski (MCB), spearheaded the testing process for applicants.

- Arleen Platte (MLCC) led a team to conduct reference checks and also served as a right hand to Myrtle helping keep the fast and furious process moving as efficiently as possible.

- Dave Thomas (Office Services) who implemented "Plan B," when the team of volunteers learned they needed to move to other quarters—special kudos for having it accomplished in just a half day!

- The many UIA staff who have provided tremendous help and assistance from Grand Rapids, Detroit, Saginaw, and Lansing including: Bob Wilkis, Pam Newsome, Davida Williams, Debra Singleton, LeShunda McZee and Sharetha Smith.

- Finally, members of MDIT for their technical expertise and assistance.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- 1,500 applications received and processed
- 446 applicants tested
- 400 interviewed
- More than 200 hired!

MIOSHA Safety and Health Advisory Committee Update

By Denise Thelen, Departmental Analyst, MIOSHA

In September 2005, Michigan Occupational Health and Safety Administration (MIOSHA) established and empowered a Safety and Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) to provide guidance and feedback on the effectiveness of the MIOSHA Safety and Health Management System (SHMS). The SHAC is comprised of representatives from all levels within MIOSHA, and includes:

- Field safety and health officers and consultants;
- Administrative support staff;
- Labor union representatives;
- A member of the MIOSHA Emergency Response Team;
- A member of the MIOSHA Disaster Response Team;
- A laboratory safety officer representative; and
- Management.

Agency administrators are completely supportive of the committee and its purpose, and are committed to providing the resources needed to develop and implement an effective safety and health management system for MIOSHA employees. The committee has 14 members, and all MIOSHA employees are given an opportunity to volunteer to serve on the committee. The committee meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month.

The responsibilities of the committee include the following activities:

- Assist in development, implementation, and monitoring of the MIOSHA SHMS, including development of the annual report on system effectiveness.
- Recommend needed system improvements.
- Recommend measurement metrics to assist in evaluating progress toward established goals.
- Develop opportunities for MIOSHA employee participation.
- Review the assessment of potential hazards of MIOSHA job functions.
- Identify strategies to anticipate, find, eliminate, and reduce injuries and illnesses of MIOSHA employees.
- Review MIOSHA employee safety suggestions, safety information, accidents, hazards, near-miss incidents, and safety and health data.
- Identify accomplishments and successes.
- Maintain open communication through written and verbal presentations to all MIOSHA employees on a regular basis.

Congratulations Denise Thelen — First MIOSHA MTI Graduate!

By Martha Yoder, Deputy Director, MIOSHA

MIOSHA is proud to announce that Denise Thelen, MIOSHA Safety and Health Coordinator, has completed MIOSHA Training Institute (MTI) Level I training. Denise participated in this training with approximately 20 other state department safety and health coordinators.

The training included:

- Fundamentals of Safety and Health - May 6, 21, and 29, 2008;
- Blueprint for a Safety and Health Management System - August 26-27, 2008;
- Ergonomic Principles - September 23, 2008; and
- When MIOSHA Enforcement Visits - September 23, 2008.

Denise is looking forward to MTI Level II training. Congratulations, Denise!



Safety & Health Comm January 2009 (Pictured from left):
Row 1: Debbie Merryfield, Leanne Haeck, Elaine Clapp and Sue Becker.
Row 2: Deb Gorkisch, Denise Thelen.
Row 3: Bob Pawlowski, Gerry Dike, April Kirchner, George Zagresky.
Row 4: Kevin Worden, Mark Richard, Jon Walker.
(Not pictured: Cindy Zastrow.)



Sherry Scott and Linda Long (center) received certificates from Denise Thelen and Martha Yoder for their 3-year service on the MIOSHA Safety and Health Advisory Committee.



Departmental Analyst Denise Thelen is the first MIOSHA employee to complete Level I MTI certification.

DELEG Welcomes New Energy Staffers

(Continued from page 3)



Robert Jackson



Steve Kulesia



Terri Novak



Jeff Spencer

Robert Jackson, Chief of Green Practices Section

Robert has more than 20 years of experience in managing statewide energy efficiency (E2), pollution prevention (P2) and sustainability programs. He currently oversees the Michigan Green Chemistry Program and the Michigan Green Chemistry Roundtable, E2 and P2 technical assistance and multi-sector incentive programs including three that have won the National Pollution Prevention Roundtable's Most Valuable P2 Program Award. Robert developed and secured permanent funding for Michigan's Retired Engineer and Technical Assistance Program (RETAP), which has provided on-site assistance to more than 1,000 facilities. Prior to his current position, he worked as a chemical engineer for the Michigan Department of Public Health as an area engineer overseeing Type I water supplies in Southeast Michigan. He also served as a chemical engineer for the City of Detroit's Water and Wastewater Department in the Processing Engineering workgroup on cryogenics and chlorination.

He is currently the member of the Michigan Green Chemistry Roundtable, Chair of the National Pollution Prevention Roundtable (NPPR) which is advocacy organization for states government and academia. He has also served as a member of the Forum on State and Tribal Toxics Action (FOSTTA) chemical policy workgroup. He is a nationally recognized expert at the application of information technology to collect and exchange environmental and pollution prevention data with states and Environmental Protection Agency through the Central Data Exchange Network. He has a degree in chemical engineering from Wayne State University.

Steve Kulesia, Energy Policy Specialist

Steve has a collective 22 years experience with DEQ and DNR. He has held positions in the Real Estate Division, Water Quality Bureau, Air Quality Division and Environmental Science and Services Division.

In his present role, Steve represents DELEG on a number of key energy initiatives, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean energy technology deployment. He also has extensive experience in energy policy, pollution prevention and sustainability issues.

He formerly served as chair of the Alternative Energy Technologies workgroup as part of the 21st Century Energy Plan. Steve currently serves as an energy policy specialist on the Governor's Michigan Climate Action Council and manages the Department of Defense/Michigan Environmental Alliance and Region V Sustainability Network.

Steve holds a Bachelor of Science degree in resource development from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University.

Terri Novak, Agriculture Specialist

Terri has more than 16 years of experience with state government from the Departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality, working with the agriculture industry on environmental initiatives. She obtained both her bachelor's and master's degrees in Agriculture and Natural Resources from Michigan State University. Together with her husband, they own and operate cash crop farms in Genesee and Ionia counties. Topics of interests include: agriEnergy, agriculture partnering, urban agriculture and sustainable agriculture.

Jeff Spencer, Project Manager, Green Practices Section

Jeff Spencer's responsibilities include facilitating and coordinating voluntary stewardship and sustainability efforts with communities and businesses including the Michigan Clean Marina Program, the Michigan Business Pollution Prevention Partnership, and the Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program.

Jeff has been with the State of Michigan for 10 years, mostly with DEQ. While there, he facilitated several voluntary partnerships including the MI Business P2 Partnership, MI Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program, and MI Clean Marina Program. Most of his duties included promoted stewardship efforts (energy efficiency/conservation, water conservation, waste minimization, recycling) among our numerous partners. He also conducted training workshops and seminars regarding energy related activities, compliance assistance, best management practices and others, and he was also responsible for developing and implementing various tracking metrics through various reporting programs.

He worked as an environmental consultant for eight years prior to joining DEQ. He has a bachelor's degree in geology from Central Michigan University.

MCB Director Selected as President of National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) State Director Patrick Cannon has begun his term as president of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). He continues to serve Michigan as MCB's state director.

The mission of NCSAB is to promote through advocacy, coordination, and education, the delivery of specialized services that enable individuals who are blind and visually impaired to achieve personal and vocational independence. With 55 member organizations throughout the country, NCSAB advocates for improved programs and quality services for blind persons.

"It has been a special privilege to serve as state director of the Michigan Commission for the Blind and as an active NCSAB member for the past 11 years. What an honor it is to be selected by my peers to serve as president of such a respected organization," Cannon said.



Pat Cannon

Cannon was appointed state director of MCB in 1997. Previously, he had been director of the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns for 10 years, where he was instrumental in gaining passage of the 1990 amendments to the Michigan Handicappers' Civil Rights Act and advocated for enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He is a member of the National Rehabilitation Association and the Council of State Administrators in Vocational Rehabilitation. He also serves on the Capital Area Transportation Authority's board of directors. In 1995, he was appointed by President Clinton to the U.S. Access Board, the independent federal regulatory agency whose mission is accessibility for people with disabilities, serving as the board's chair in 1997 and 1998. He was named disability policy advisor to Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm in 2003 and also as her state ADA coordinator in 2004.

For more information about NCSAB, visit the organization's website at www.nesab.org.

BWT Plays Host to Visiting Baltimore Officials



Officials from the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation paid a visit to Michigan recently to meet with staff from the Bureau of Workforce Transformation. The purpose of the visit was to share workforce training strategies and compare workforce-related programs. Above, Deputy Director Andy Levin presents information about No Worker Left Behind to Tom Perez, Maryland's Secretary of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (second from left), and other representatives from Maryland.

MCB Staff News

Leatrice Fullerton began working part-time in the MCB Training Center kitchen October 6 doing prep work, including side dishes and desserts. She just graduated from Western Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in social work. Leatrice is a current MCB client and former MCB Training Center student, and she's enjoying this experience on the other side of the cafeteria line. She says, "I really like interacting with the students and staff."



Gwen McNeal and Stephanie Lwanga staffed the MCB booth at the November 13 Poverty Summit in Detroit, a conference for business and community leaders organized by the Michigan Department of Human Services to find ways to reduce poverty and stimulate economic opportunities in the region.

Dan Furton is the new rehabilitation counselor in the Michigan Commission for the Blind Lansing regional office, as of November 17. Dan works with MCB clients in Washtenaw, Hillsdale, Jackson, and Lenawee counties. He completed his M.A. in Rehabilitation Counseling at Michigan State University. In his spare time, he likes to play guitar and listen to blues and classic rock, although he says he hasn't had any spare time since his son was born two years ago!

Laura Ozanich joined the kitchen staff at the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo on December 15 as a temporary employee while Karen Simmons is off work until late January. Laura said she just loves the center, the people there, and seeing all they do for the students. When she's not at the center, Laura is in Lansing working as a real estate broker, master tailor, and costume shop owner.

Natally Rickert is a substitute orientation and mobility instructor who started work at the MCB Training Center in December. She's happy to be a new member of the MCB team and enjoys working with clients and the training center staff.

Ken Smedley, who worked at the MCB Training Center as a mobility instructor for more than 33 years, retired on February 1.

Gail Toda started work as a Rehabilitation Teacher at the MCB Training Center on December 15. She brings more than 25 years of experience to the job, most recently, as a substitute teacher at the MCB Training Center. She has a B.A.

in elementary education and sociology from Alma College and an M.A. in rehab teaching from Western Michigan University. She also has some specialized training working with persons who are DeafBlind.

Happy Birthday Louis Braille!

By Lucy Edmonds, Business Enterprise Programs, MCB

Louis Braille was one of the movers and shakers of the blindness community—a man far ahead of his time. He revolutionized the way in which people who are blind had access to written information by creating the Braille alphabet and system of writing.

Louis Braille was born on January 4, 1809, in Calvary, France. When he was four years old, he accidentally stabbed himself in one eye with his father's awl. After losing the sight in that eye, he also lost it in the other eye as a result of sympathetic ophthalmia, a condition in which the unaffected eye loses its vision almost in sympathy of the affected eye.

By the age of 10, he had earned a scholarship to the Royal Institution for Blind Youth in Paris. One of the hardships he faced in school was limited access to the written word. At that time, in order to produce books for the blind, raised print letters were employed. Unfortunately, these letters were quite large, meaning they took up far more space than ordinary print. These books were extremely heavy, with some weighing up to 100 pounds!

While he was still a student, the school was visited by a captain of the army who had developed a system called the Night Code. This consisted of 12 dots and dashes, and was a way for the army to pass messages back and forth without the enemy knowing what they were about. This gave Braille his idea for a similar system for the blind, using a six-dot cell. Thus, he invented the first form of Braille, which has changed very little in all this time. Later, he also added notations for math and science.

Unfortunately, his method of reading and writing Braille was not taught until after his death from tuberculosis in 1852.

Today, Mr. Braille is getting recognition from the mainstream community. Congress passed, and President Bush signed into law, an act that will allow a Louis Braille bicentennial coin to be minted in 2009, which will also have Braille engraved on the face of the coin. It is truly wonderful to see Louis Braille finally getting the recognition he deserves.



Joey Combs checks an unemployed worker's claim for benefits.

UIA expands services and staffing to meet surging unemployment claims

(Continued from page 1)

before the crush of claims hit in December. UIA had already hired 50 additional staff in July and had them fully trained and answering calls by November. It also had increased its computer server capacity and was well along in developing its online MARVIN system.

Thanks to expanded hours, extra staff, and added capacity, UIA Director Stephen Geskey anticipates improved responsiveness at the agency.

"We will increase the average number of callers we help from 11,000 a day in December to over 12,000 a day in February," he predicted. "And these numbers will only increase as our newly hired staff comes on board."

Teamwork at its Finest

In the wake of Gov. Granholm's call to action assisting the Unemployment Insurance Agency, true teamwork has never been so pervasive or apparent.

Scores of DELEG employees – and those from other agencies too – rallied to the aid of the UIA by offering time, services and expertise to make service delivery improvements as promptly as possible. The UIA received offers of assistance from the Board of Review to the Workers' Compensation Agency, and virtually every bureau in between.

While I do not personally know everyone whose hands touched the UIA's recent hiring goals, I know that an effort of this scale required *a lot* of help. Thank you. In particular, I need to thank Patty Gamin and Myrtle Gregg-Lafaye whose personal involvement and leadership contributed greatly to achieve what not long ago seemed to be an overly ambitious goal.

For those of you who helped sift through and screen resumes, thank you. To those of you who conducted and reviewed the written examinations, I am thankful. To those of you who conducted the interviews, I am grateful. To those of you who

contacted references and other administrative functions, thanks. To all of you whose support was evident to those of us within the UIA, please know it made a difference.



daily praise from the unemployed workers. With a hint of irony, some workers are so impressed by the service they receive, they tie another phone line up to compliment the agency! Finally, to those of you new to the UIA, welcome; I'm glad you are now with us.

With great respect and appreciation,

Stephen M. Geskey, Director
Unemployment Insurance Agency

Moving to the Beat of His Own Drum

Dominique Swanson, the youngest son of Maria Gilson, an unemployment insurance examiner at the Detroit Remote Initial Claims Center (RICC), was among those featured in a recent Detroit News story about the drum group in which he plays.

Dominique and students from the Marcus Garvey Academy, where their group, Nanou Djiapo (pronounced Naw-noh Jaw-poh) was started, were written about by the News, as they were spreading joy at Kwanzaa fests and playing for a homecoming celebration. The 14-member group is made up of seven men — the drummers — and seven women — the dancers. Most of the members are teens that rehearse up to three hours, two or three days a week, and perform at events around the country.

Dominique attends the Detroit School of Performing Arts and is learning more about playing the percussion drum, which he started playing at age five. He also plays the African drum in the African Drum and Dance ensemble.



Dominique Swanson, son of UIA's Maria Gilson, beats the drum he plays as a member of the Nanou Djiapo group. The group was featured in a recent *Detroit News* story.

Howard University Band Performs at Inauguration

Jasmine Parnell, daughter of Inger Parnell, an analyst in the UI Benefit Procedures Unit at the Unemployment Insurance Agency, was among those celebrating the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Jasmine and fellow members of the Howard University Showtime Marching Band performed at the 56th Presidential Inauguration Parade on January 20.

Inaugural Committee officials received 1,382 applications from bands across the country, wanting to participate in the parade. However, only 70 to 90 bands were selected to perform. The 2008 presidential election was the first one Jasmine voted in, and she was extremely excited to have had the opportunity to participate in this historical event.



Harmony Angelique Willis

Detroit RICC welcomes newest addition!

By Haili Brown, UIA

UIA recently welcomed a new arrival. Harmony Angelique Willis was born on December 6, 2008 at 12:44 pm. She weighed in at 9 lbs., 7 oz. Loutricia Willis is the proud mother and Treasure and Marques are the proud siblings of Harmony. Loutricia is a UIE at the Detroit RICC, and is looking forward to spending all the precious moments with her beautiful daughter.

We Get Letters ... and E-mails!

We all know DELEG is filled with employees who go above and beyond the call of duty every day, but often we never hear about it. If you or someone you work with has received a phone call, e-mail, or letter of praise for exceptional customer service, please forward it to LEGwork editor Kathy Fagan, who will make sure it appears on the "We Get Letters and E-mails" page of the next issue. This is your chance to blow your own horn or recognize a co-worker for a job well done!

Debbie Wilson, a blind rehabilitation counselor at the Michigan Commission for the Blind Flint office, received this letter from the mother of one of her clients after MCB provided computer equipment and computer training as the client prepares to enter college:

I just wanted to write a short note to say thank you so much for [my daughter's] equipment. The laptop has been used a lot already. The zoomtext [magnifying software] is a tremendous asset to [her] using this computer. . . . I am sure that I will be speaking to you again once we get this college process going . . . Again, thank you so much for your help."

Irene Garcia-Solice, Michigan Rehabilitation Services JET counselor in the Ann Arbor District Office, received the following praise:

I am JET the coordinator for three counties — Jackson, Hillsdale, and Lenawee. Our MRS JET counselor is Irene Garcia-Solice and she services those same three counties. I, along with our program manager from Southcentral Michigan Works, have had several meeting with Irene to coordinate services. I have to give credit where credit is due, our high numbers reflect directly upon the work Irene does with our clients. She is outstanding in her customer service, her quick action in dealing with our referrals and has an empathetic but direct approach which yields results. We are very lucky to have her.

West Region Assistant Manager Sherry Gordon received an email from a client expressing her appreciation for Karyn Silky, a rehabilitation counselor with the Grand Rapids MCB office. The note said, in part:

"I met Karyn several years ago when I gave up on any kind of productive life.... That day was a life changer....

"Karyn has been there for me, encouraged me when I was down, showed me how to do what sighted people can do. With her help, I feel I can do most anything on my own, just a little slower and round-about.... Karyn was there to make sure we were okay and learning what we wanted to learn. I have gone to unfamiliar places, but I know that Karyn was always a call away to give me support to go on.

"I have talked to several of her other clients.... They all agree with me that Karyn is a very special dedicated teacher. She never makes you feel like less of a person, doesn't accept any of our pity parties and is always encouraging us to try something new.

"My life has changed from a future of darkness to looking forward to a bright future. Being blind is now just a bump in the road thanks completely to Karyn Silky. Anyone who gets the opportunity to have her as their counselor is a very lucky person."

Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Detroit Renaissance/Detroit Mack Office, counselor Athena Stephens, received this survey response from an MRS customer regarding services received: "The staff was very understanding and helpful in planning my rehabilitation plan. Thank you, and Happy New Year to all at MRS Mack Office."

Debbie Wilson, a blind rehabilitation counselor at the Michigan Commission for the Blind Flint office, received a letter from the mother of one of her clients after MCB provided computer equipment and computer training as the client prepares to enter college:

"I just wanted to write a short note to say thank you so much for Katelyn's equipment. The laptop has been used a lot already. The zoomtext is a tremendous asset to Katelyn using this computer. . . . I am sure that I will be speaking to you again once we get this college process going . . . Again, thank you so much for your help."

Steve Hill, MRS district Manager — Detroit Renaissance District, received the following letter about Rehabilitation Counselor Marcus Bradley:

My name is Tina, and I am a recipient of services from MRS. Marcus Bradley is my counselor and he is the best thing that has happened in my life since sliced bread.

Michael has been instrumental in me obtaining employment with Wayne County. I am presently employed as a contractual employee as a customer service specialist. This is a one year contract position, with the option of the contract being renewed in one year. I am making 10 dollars an hour with no benefits, yet I am working. This is something that I had not done in a long time. My specific obstacles of substance abuse, homelessness, mental illness, and a habitual criminal seemed overwhelming yet he was undaunted in his efforts to encourage and motivate me to continue striving for excellence and seeking employment.

He was able to provide transportation assistance, eyeglasses, clothing, and continued encouragement to continue in the struggle even when circumstances seemed bleak.

I would appreciate if you as his supervisor could give him some kind of "kudo" for doing such an outstanding and excellent job.

I am a very vocal person, and I plan on sharing my experience with each and every person I come in contact who needs MRS services. I also plan on telling them to ask for Marcus Bradley specifically.

